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Patterson Securing Safer Water for Residents

Michigan Senate Passed Authority Board for DWSD

LANSING – On Thursday, March 6, 2003 the Michigan Senate passed legislation to create a five-member authority board for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD), co-sponsored by Senator Bruce Patterson (R-Canton).

The current system consists of seven members. All members are appointed by the Mayor of Detroit. Four members of the board represent the city of Detroit.

The two-bill package would alter this system by creating a new authority board. The board would consist of five members: one each from Oakland, Macomb and Genesee Counties, appointed by their county board of commissioners; one member from Wayne County elected by the Mayor of Detroit, with the advice and consent of the Detroit City council; and one member from Wayne County elected through a majority vote of the mayors of the five largest municipalities in Wayne County, excluding Detroit. Canton Township would be one of the five deciding votes to elect the representative.

“This bill is key for the residents I represent,” explained Patterson. “The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department represents 4.3 million customers. Three quarters of these customers reside outside of the city of Detroit. However, they currently have no representation. This is unacceptable. These customers deserve accountability, and we have accomplished this through our bill.”

Patterson played a key role in shaping this legislation. He successfully amended the bill to require disclosure of charges that exceed the actual cost for providing water services. The amount will be itemized annually on the customer’s bill.

“I felt that as paying customers, we should know who we are actually paying and how much we are paying them. This will make the system open, accountable, and accessible,” Patterson said.

Senate Bill 195 is tie-barred with House Bill 4206. Together they would create an authority board to provide oversight on rate increases and contracts of the DWSD. The board would be structured in the same format as the Michigan Public Service Commission. The authority of the DWSD will remain under the ownership of the City of Detroit.

Senate Bill 195 now returns to the House of Representatives for consideration.